

The Cutting Circle: How Making Challenges Design

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ABSTRACT

The Cutting Circle is an international research initiative by fashion designers/patternmakers and educators Timo Rissanen, Julian Roberts and Holly McQuillan. By exploring alternative methods of making clothes and patterns, we have employed 'risky' design practice, research and teaching to develop zero waste fashion and subtraction cutting. The project manifested as an intensive two-week practice-based research event, where via a series of collaborative collisions, experiments and design intersections, we asked the following three questions. What costs/benefits can we identify to aid the development of a sustainable fashion industry through risk taking at the intersection of our design practices? What new knowledge arises in risky collaborative design practice? And how can this new knowledge be best communicated to foster an environment of risk-taking within the traditionally risk adverse fashion industry? This paper primarily discusses our responses to the first two questions and related issues raised. It covers how experimenting with each other's design practice and practicing in each other's creative space as we both designed and made, enable the free transfer of ideas and cross-pollination, thus expanding our ability to identify links, gaps and opportunities. The Cutting Circle project has developed experimental practices with emphasis on the fusion of aesthetics, patternmaking, craft and socially invigorating design.

Keywords: Fashion, Design, Patternmaking, Open Design, Collaboration, Experimentation

1. Introduction

This paper breaks with some conventions in academic writing; this is partly driven by a desire to see an exuberantly creative field written about creatively. The lack of a long history of academic writing about fashion practice is an opportunity, not a hindrance. As an example, throughout the paper, we have written about what we did in the first person, to eliminate the oft-utilised detachment that seems in this instance unnecessary, even misleading. Given that the paper is in part driven by a desire to give makers a voice, it seems crucial to give makers a voice in this paper too.

2. Introduction: Secretive, Glamorous and Flat?

At once a secretive clique and the very public face of their brands, fashion designers are reluctant to

share ideas or lay their design processes and problems open for the world to see. The industry maintains a strict veil of glamour around the notion of what a designer is and does, often ignoring the many hands that go into the production of clothing. Contributing to this, students are often encouraged to view themselves as creative geniuses with visions of a career as fashion designers "somewhere between rock star and artist, designing mainly with a sketchbook and directing a group of able production people", which is how industry representative Paul Blomfield (Blomfield & Trade, 2002) had put it in his influential scoping study of designer fashion in New Zealand. The patternmaker is one of those "able production people" and by contrast, generally hidden from the public gaze, instead working behind the scenes to help manifest the vision of the designer. The distance between designer and maker of fashion at the design stage can be both philosophical and physical, with manufacture often hidden from view in far away factories and sweatshops, kept at arm's length, and

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not talked about or celebrated. Roberts further stated that “before you buy a garment and wear it, it will have been touched by many skillful hands, but often the hand that touches it the LEAST is the hand of the fashion designer” (Romano, 2011). Patternmakers often operate entirely separately from designers, sometimes even in different buildings, or entirely different countries. This divorcing of roles within the fashion industry requires highly detailed “specification” drawings and details in order to communicate the intentions of the designers, the drawings for which are almost always fronts and backs. Indeed, one common name for these line drawings is “flats”, which reveals the flattened nature of the garment design process. In translating these “flats”, patternmakers base their interpretations on “blocks” which are simplified front and back pattern pieces from which many of the world’s garments are derived. Yet the body is three-dimensional and not flat, and to design and pattern-make for the human body, while pretending that it is flat, seems manifestly counterintuitive. Once the garments are produced and released into the market in the usual storm of media, mostly taking the form of the ubiquitous front view photographs from the catwalk or look-book, once again, fashion garments are flattened. When Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons sent models down the catwalk for AW 2012 devoid of a soundtrack with two-dimensional garments full of wry cliché, it was perhaps a critique of the growing ‘flatness’ of the industry. Kawakubo is renowned for being an innovator in the true sense of the word in the fashion world, constantly pushing viewers and wearers with her own unique view of the dressed body – famously bulging and distorted, always three-dimensional – so for her to present such a flat body of work speaks volumes of the state of the industry. As the representation of the fashion industry becomes more and more about head to toe, front views, ubiquitous and repetitive copies, fashion rebels like Rei Kawakubo and Junya Watanabe seek to find alternatives. For many, this alternative is evident in the rise of craftsmanship, in particular, a re-emergence of innovative patternmaking. The three designer/patternmakers who collaborated in The Cutting Circle intentionally conflated the design, pattern making and construction processes, thus acknowledging the difficulties in marrying flat fabric with the three dimensional figure by taking advantage of the fluidity of cloth, all while attempting to

uncover alternative aesthetics, processes and ways of looking at fashion clothing.

During The Cutting Circle, we, through experimenting with each other’s design practice and practicing in each other’s creative space as we both designed and made, enjoyed the free transfer of ideas and cross-pollination, a process which expanded our ability to identify links, gaps and opportunities. This collaborative, co-creative and open design process is in stark contrast to the vast majority of the fashion industry, but one that demonstrates what can be possible through the sharing of ideas. The project gave scope for the collaborative team to knit their skills and expand their design research practices and developed experimental practices with emphasis on the fusion of aesthetics, patternmaking, craft and socially invigorating design. We asked three questions: what costs/benefits can we identify to aid the development of a sustainable fashion industry through risk taking at the intersection of our design practices? What new knowledge arises in risky collaborative design practice? And finally, how can this new knowledge be best communicated to foster an environment of risk-taking within the traditionally risk adverse fashion industry?

3. What Costs / Benefits can We Identify to Aid the Development of a Sustainable Fashion Industry Through Risk Taking at The Intersection of Our Design Practices?

The separation of designer, maker and consumer within the fashion system has led over the last 200 years to an industry responsible for large volumes of waste at both the pre- and post-consumer end of the system. Much of both pre- and post-consumer waste is invisible to the designer, and yet design that incorporates critical making may be the source of some solutions for this waste. The fostering of opportunities for deeper and richer engagement between designer, maker and consumer needs to be on top of the fashion design agenda for sustainability.

Subtraction cutting is a design approach developed by Julian Roberts (Romano, 2011) that makes no separation between design and making. Similarly, zero waste fashion design, which is an old approach that results in no fabric waste and

extensively researched and practiced by Holly McQuillan and Timo Rissanen, incorporates making into design. Both subtraction cutting and zero waste fashion design are processes that enforce a change in structure within workrooms that take up the challenge to design in these ways. To design both zero waste and subtraction cut garments, one needs to be able to pattern cut ‘from nothing’ rather than in response to a sketch; pattern cutting is integral to design ideation. Design for the three of us occurs in many places, perhaps most importantly in the development of the pattern in response to the body that will inhabit it. Such approaches can be inherently risky design and garment creation processes and forge an alternative design approach routed in making and the linked dimensions of body and cloth. We will briefly explain our processes and their differences and similarities.

3.1 Usual Ways of Working

Holly McQuillan: I acknowledge my usual design process is an isolated one – working alone, usually on a computer with a vector graphics software program to develop two-dimensional patterns, often in response to a challenge or ‘problem’ defined either by myself or a client. The pattern is tested in the relative safety of my office using small printed patterns that are cut and stuck together with masking tape. Once the design is more resolved, it is cut in cloth, sewn in private, enabling more time for resolution and refinement through exploration of finishings and further design decisions. An important aspect of this is exploring its relationship with the body and space and if successful, may then be shown in public. I do share some of my process through my blog (<http://www.hollymcquillan.com>), but this is inevitably edited to some degree, and the distant format enables a degree of detachment from possible critique. The opportunities working within the boundaries of zero waste are for the possible emergence of new forms, a difficulty in copying existing aesthetics and a required holistic approach to design that requires that the designer/pattern maker acknowledge the materiality of the cloth used and develop all aspects of the garment design and production simultaneously.

Timo Rissanen: I have the same two starting points for every design project: the cloth and the human

body. The older I get, the more it is just about the interaction between these. As for design ideation, any and all methods are used. I do not separate pattern cutting and draping in silos – they meld into one. I sketch because it is a fast way of thinking through an idea; however, this is not limited to sketching garments – patterns and pattern layouts on fabric are sketched in equal numbers. Trying toiles on is an inherent part of the design process; how a garment feels on, how it moves when the wearer moves – these are all important. Garment construction is firmly part of the design process for me; seam and edge finishes are invented based on the cloth and during toile-making. Zero waste fashion design is liberating for me; my practice before was always about adhering to the sketch – cutting the pattern and making the toile according to the sketch. Zero waste fashion requires pattern cutting without knowing exactly what one is pattern cutting.

Julian Roberts: I use a process I invented called subtraction cutting. I design in patterns, rather than in vague illustrative drawings, which would usually become reinterpreted by other skilled cutters. My process involves designing not the exterior, not the front, back or side; indeed, there are usually no side seams to my garments (after all, do humans have side seams?). Instead, I design the interior space of the garment that the body travels through. This approach results in forms that are difficult to predict, requiring an intimate relationship between designer, hand, cloth and body. I spend much of my time teaching workshops full of students on how to take the creation of clothing in new directions by engaging their maker-mind in the design process.

All: Initially, the experience of working together creatively was a challenge, as demonstrated by the first day of The Cutting Circle. Very little was achieved by way of actual work on garments. A meeting was called in a café and there was a mutual acknowledgment that working in front of the other two was an uncomfortable experience. While we knew each other and each other’s work, the act of practicing in the company of others was intimidating, largely due to the regard in which we held each other’s research and practice, and also due to the unfamiliarity of working at all in front of one another. At the beginning of any collaborative design process, there will be a period of settling in and getting to know the strengths,

weaknesses of the team members, and more generally, how they work. Through acknowledging the shared discomfort on the first day, it was to a large degree extinguished and we were able to move on (Figure 1).

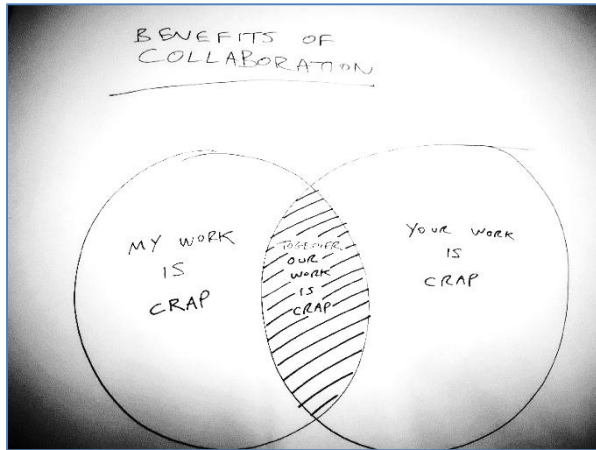


Fig. 1. The Benefits of Collaboration

3.2 Risk Taking in Action

Julian Roberts: Although we were initially intimidated at the prospect of working together, it became easier to start by identifying a problem, rather than a challenge. The problem of the hour was that Timo's luggage had not arrived from Finland, and he had no clothes to wear except for a fetching pair of grey jersey Qantas pants and a t-shirt. So, it seemed a good idea to make him something to wear.

I started by drawing around the outline of Timo who laid down on the floor, to get a sense of his (gigantic!) proportions, and then to make my own ruler based on the outline of his arm in order to construct a sleeve (not a top or shirt or jacket, but a sleeve in isolation, awaiting a body). When making a Timo-sized sleeve, there seems little point in using a ruler with centimeters or inches marked on it, when you can instead use a ruler made from the arm that the sleeve will cover (Figure 2). In such circumstances, it makes perfect sense to make your own tools and measures, rather than use abstract measurements that can become lost in translation between metric and imperial conversion.

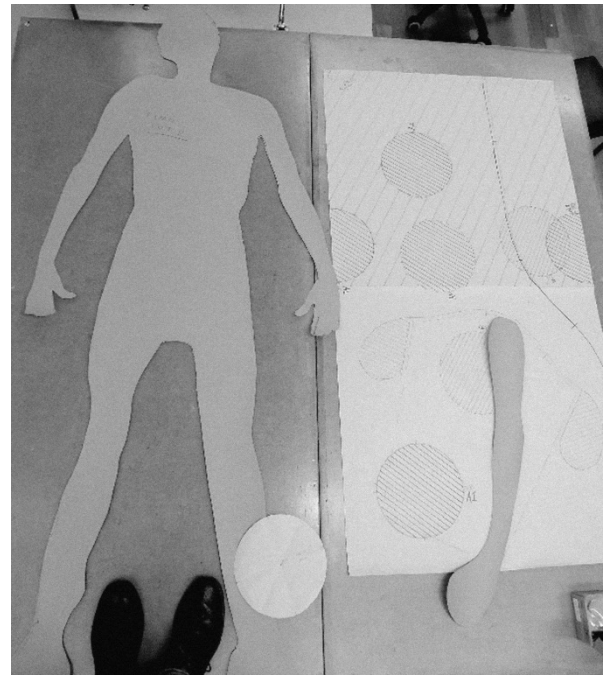


Fig. 2. A Timo Rissanen Scale Ruler and Sleeve

The sleeve then travelled in two directions: Holly cut a body for the sleeve, with a collar made from the subtraction holes that were my debris/waste; Timo put the sleeve on his leg instead of his arm, that's the kind of guy Timo is. He simply doesn't follow the strict rules policed by Vogue. When accidents happen, new design arises, so in response, I developed a pair of trousers from the sleeve that became named 'Timo's Lost Luggage Trouser' (Figure 3), which Holly then digitized and tightened up to reduce waste.



Fig. 3. Timo's Lost Luggage Trouser

These two feedback loops created further momentum and experimentation. We were by this point, all working in parallel, on a roll. We began to show off a little and have fun, and relax in each other's company.

Timo Rissanen: I decided to adapt Julian's subtraction cutting technique to zero waste through designing a pair of trousers. I adapted one of the square cut trousers that I had previously made, and extended the leg length that I anticipated of needing more fabric based on my observations of Julian's garments. Instead of cutting circles to make the holes for the tunnels, I cut the required pieces – gussets, waistbands, pocket pieces – from the leg shapes. At this point, however, I didn't have a clear understanding of the impact that sewing the pairs of holes together within the leg tunnel would have. The first toile was such that no human with two legs could get into them as the placement of the holes had made one leg too narrow. The second toile was more successful, albeit for a human with legs some two metres long (Figure 4). These two seeming catastrophes were crucial to contributing towards my understanding of subtraction cutting, and particularly the impact of the placement of the holes on the overall piece and in relation to each other. Through this exercise, I was also able to confirm a hunch from several years earlier that subtraction cutting lends itself to a zero waste outcome easily.

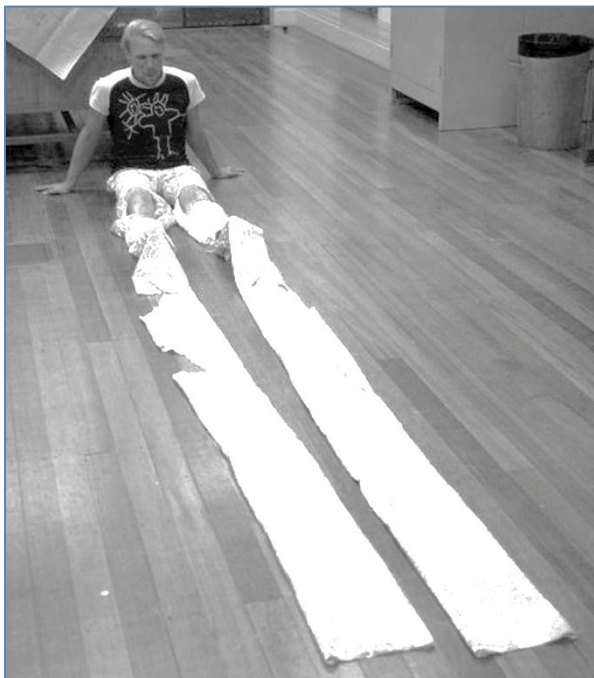


Fig. 4. Rissanen's Second Subtraction Cut, Zero Waste Trousler Toile

Holly McQuillan: A collaborative exercise between Julian and me revealed issues of ownership, but revealed opportunities for zero waste pattern design to respond to waste created

by others. The design of this garment followed a kind of Exquisite Corpse game approach. Julian designed two subtraction cut patterns, which could be both sleeve and trouser leg. Through a group discussion, it was determined that one of the sleeve/legs might work best as a sleeve and so the task was given to me to generate the remainder of the garment. The (now) sleeve was not zero waste and there remained two circles and two teardrop shaped sections from the sleeve crown area for each sleeve. The resulting garment (Figure 5) attempts to be unisex and celebrate the form of Julian's sleeve design while resolving the use of the left over sections generated by Julian and being zero waste in its entirety. As part of this process, I had to fully understand and investigate how Julian's sleeve was made. Due to its non-traditional sleeve form and pattern, much of my usual understanding of a sleeve needed to be built on substantially. By the time I had made my final version, I had grasped the process enough to begin to develop it further in my own practice. So, I asked, who "owns" this design? Both of us, of course, but in many ways, it exists as a product of the existing fashion design process, where incremental adaptations over time lead to an evolution of style. However, the spirit in which this has been enacted is quite different.



Fig. 5. Roberts/McQuillan Collaboration Shirt

As part of a later independent work “Void” exhibited in Object Gallery in Sydney, I further developed the Collaboration Shirt design. In this example (Figures 6 and 6.1), you can see the development and application of the innovative practice employed by Julian during The Cutting Circle applied in my own work. The previously square perimeter of the looped sleeve pattern is

fully integrated into the curved side body and armhole of the body of the VOID shirt. This translation and development of ideas from one design to another would not have occurred without the full understanding possible through collaboration as opposed to visual copying which usually takes place in a fashion studio.

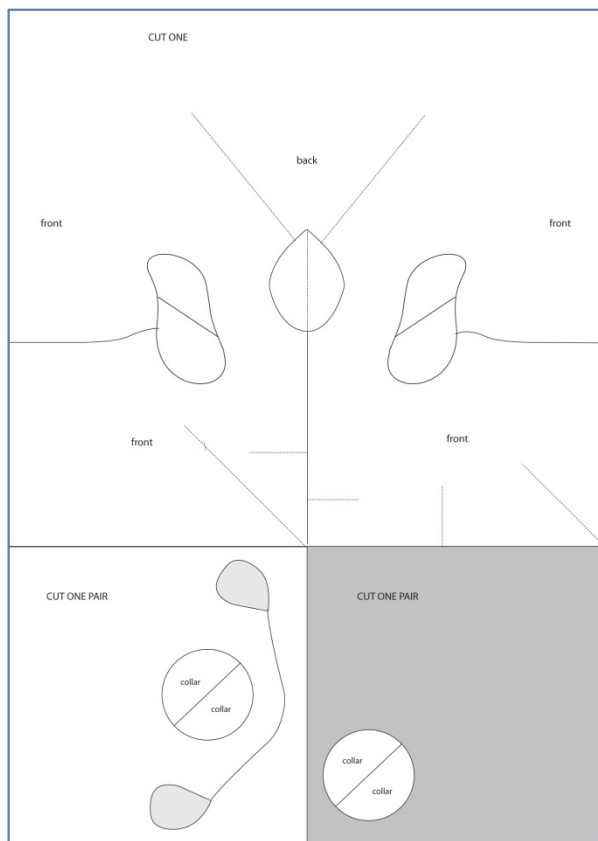


Fig. 6. The Cutting Circle Collaboration Shirt Pattern

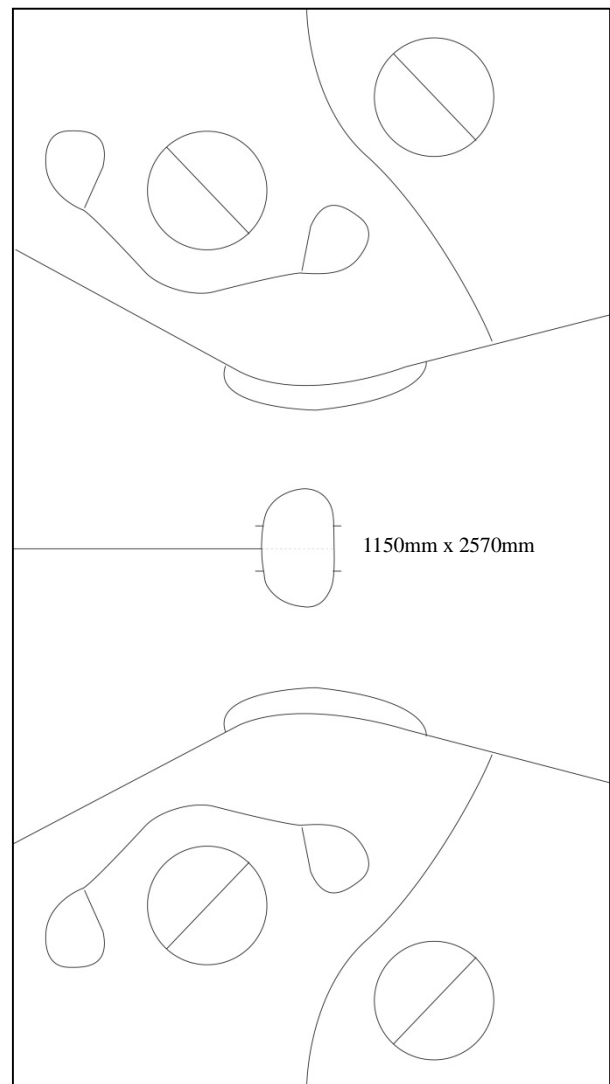


Fig. 6.1 VOID Collaboration Shirt Pattern

Timo Rissanen: Towards the end of the two weeks, I redesigned a shirt I had made for an exhibition two years earlier. My intention was to resolve one particular issue with the original shirt: in order for it to be zero waste, two shirts needed to be cut, as the marker of one interlocked into the marker of another to create one rectangular marker (Figure 7). Redesigning the shirt was fast as considerations such as garment shape and fit were

already resolved. However, the fabric I was now using was wider than the one from two years earlier. Through discussion with Holly, I was able to resolve the redesign of this shirt (Figure 7.1) so that the only visual change was the loss of the elbow patches in the original shirt.

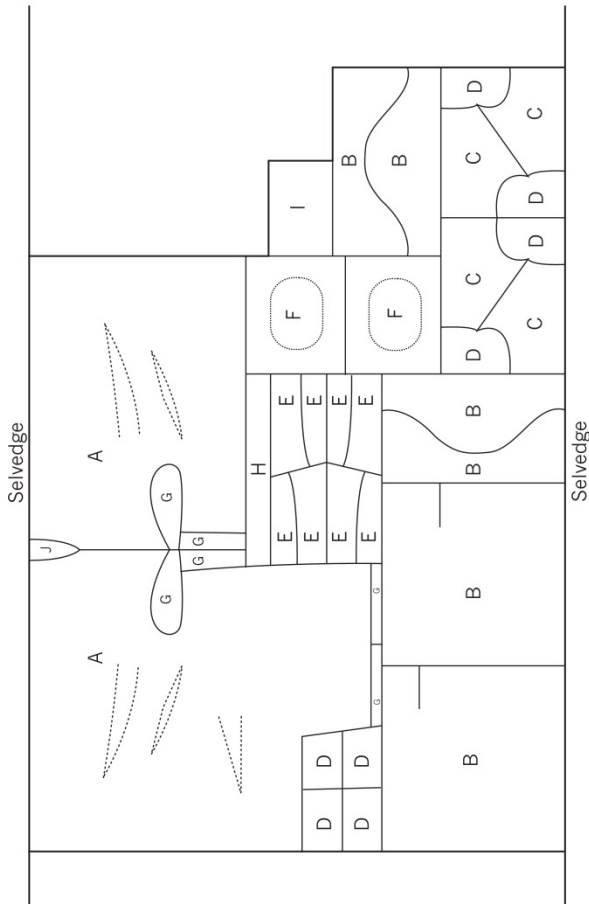


Fig. 7. Original Endurance Shirt Pattern

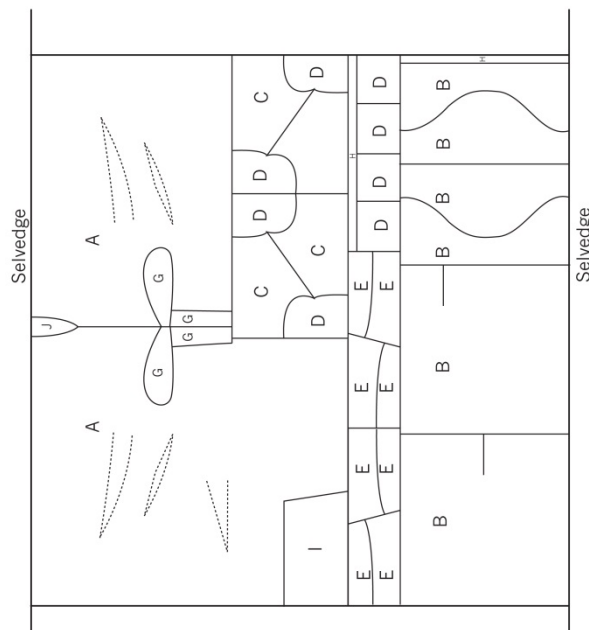


Fig. 7.1 The Cutting Circle Endurance Shirt Pattern

What costs/benefits can we identify to aid the development of a sustainable fashion industry through risk taking at the intersection of our design practices?

We considered the implications that designing in this manner might be on the development of a sustainable fashion industry. For a start, it can result in the unexpected. Much of the fashion we see is a copy of what has been done before, either last week, season or century. For many, the design process directly or indirectly involves the copying of an existing design, so the work of the patternmaker has become to faithfully recreate the look within the size range of the company and for the desired fabrication, perhaps with a few modifications. This rapid ‘design’ production directly and indirectly leads to the dissemination of similar styles globally, a process that leads to its ever-faster fashion ‘death’. Such critique of fashion is an old one; Simmel (1957) said that “whenever we imitate we transfer not only the demand for creative activity, but also the responsibility for the action from ourselves to another”, while his contemporaries Veblen & Mills (1899) wrote that for style to be reputable, it also needed to be wasteful, highlighting that without rapid turn over of styles due to consumer boredom, many companies would struggle to make a profit. Pamela Church Gibson (Black & Alexander, 2012) argued that “(t)he only argument that has yet to be convincingly refuted is that regarding the link between fashion and unnecessary change”. Perhaps new methods of design and the liberating embrace of openness can assist in de-coupling the fashion experience from incessant change?

For most companies, it does not make economic sense to invest time (and therefore money) into the development of a design if the likely outcome is not known. The speed of change is driven by the monetary benefits of economies of scale and consumer demand, so while the argument for which comes first often descends into a chicken and egg debate, the problem is a very real and immediate one for fashion companies. They solve this problem by repeating and copying existing styles. It is the foundation of the contemporary fashion system. The Canongate Wall of the Scottish Parliament has a quote from the architect Charles Rennie MacIntosh: “There is hope in honest error. None in the icy perfections of the mere stylist”. Have fashion designers become ‘mere’ stylists? With economic and time pressures at an all time high for fashion creatives, the space once available for truly innovative fashion is being

squeezed out and much of what does happen occurs at the fringes of the industry. This is often in education, where both graduates and academics in many cases have more creative time and space without the financial restrictions demanded by the need to produce a commercial body of work up to 6 times per year or more in the case of fast fashion. To keep up with demand, imitation becomes necessary, and since, as Simmel (1957) argued, imitation transfers responsibility to someone else, our waste becomes someone else's problem. At a time when we all need to take responsibility for our actions, perhaps imitation as it exists within the fashion world needs to transform.

At the conclusion of the two-week event, each of us 'wrote' the word 'risk' on fabric, with the aim of turning the resulting pieces into garments. At the time of writing this paper some 18 months later, only Holly has completed these garments. This suggests that without the immediacy of the collaborative space generated by The Cutting Circle, much of the momentum generated can be lost, and each of us largely reverts back to our practices as they existed before with a few small but important exceptions. A major benefit of working collaboratively is the push that we get to move out of our respective comfort zones.

4. What New Knowledge Arises in Risky Collaborative Design Practice?

Much of what we do could be regarded as to what Ratto (Abel et al., 2011; Ratto, 2011) referred to as critical making. "The term critical making is intended to highlight the interwoven material and conceptual work that making involves...it attempts to connect humanistic practices of conceptual and scholarly exploration to design methodologies including story boarding, brainstorming, bodystorming and prototyping." While his description and following examples tend to lean toward 'technological making' which involves hardware and software for formats such as cellphones, the concept is readily transferable to other products and processes. In The Cutting Circle, we actively sought to share the process, progress, and 'how to' aspects of the work undertaken, which ultimately led to a series of workshops that directly disseminated the findings of our research to participants both online through a blog (<http://thecuttingcircle.com>) and Facebook, and in person in the workshops and discussions

themselves. The very designing and making of garments through The Cutting Circle is an act of criticality, questioning the very design processes traditionally used within the context of fashion creation (secretive, linear, hierarchical). Ratto (2011) wrote:

Critical making is less about the aesthetics and politics of design work (as Critical Design is), and focuses instead on making practices themselves as processes of material and conceptual exploration. The ultimate goal of critical making experiences is not the evocative or pedagogical object intended to be experienced by others, but rather the creation of novel understandings by makers themselves. Neither object nor services are the currency of critical making. For me, it is the making experience that must be shared.

Ratto's (2011) assertion is one shared by the three of us as makers and educators. Making cannot be an act after thinking, neither can the goal be to create more things – even "critical" things. Fashion design practice separates making from thinking from designing while creating artifacts which most often provide a single serve use and with both subtraction cutting and zero waste fashion design, these separations are impossible. Ratto explained that "(t)he objects of critical making are intended to be shared making experiences, curated through both material and textual instructions", an approach which could meld well with patternmaking, extending and improving on the current model of education and practice.

Patternmaking is seen by many to be an aloof, mathematical and often dry practice, certainly not design or even 'creative', and very inaccessible. Almond (2010, p.16) described how pattern making "is often presented as a technical and mathematically complex science but that what is needed is "awareness of experience, self-reliance and manipulation of concepts as a link to creativity" – he even uses the term "rebellion" to describe the approach necessary to be a creative pattern cutter. Unfortunately, the basic skills are usually shared through highly technical books and by highly skilled technicians within educational institutes, both of which often place importance on the accurate manifestation of design sketch instead of the more holistic approach, which is possible. However, when patternmaking and design do meet

as equals, magical things can happen. Patternmaker, designer and educator Shingo Sato gives away many of his techniques and makes his 'tools of the trade' readily available on YouTube and through free online workshops mediated through Facebook. While his approach, which he calls "Transformation, Reconstruction" (Sato, 2012) has been critiqued as simply dart manipulation and elimination, something which is neither new or innovative, importantly, he demystifies the process, merging design with patternmaking to "draw" line and form on the dress form, often with a magic marker. An exploration of his techniques reveals an ease with breaking tradition, and with the adoption of new form, the old rules need not apply. The skilled and creative patternmaker can become a kind of magician-designer, deceiving the wearer and viewer, distorting the dressed body, giving us something refreshing.

4.1 Other Ways of Working and Sharing

Upon reflection, an interesting aspect of our collaboration in The Cutting Circle is that we were not using fashion images of other people to 'inspire' us or map out how our work might aesthetically fit together. "A typical design studio, professional or academic, has a high material character—in the sense that it is full of material objects and design artifacts; office walls and other working surfaces full of post-it notes, sketches and magazine clips for sharing ideas and inspiration; physical models and prototypes lying on the desks and so on" (Vyas et al. 2012, p.1). Our design studio was highly material; it had bits of patterns, sewing machines, toiles of garments that we had made, diagrams of "your work is crap/my work is crap/together our work is crap" but there was nothing directing the look of our work or 'inspiring' it. Instead, we went to a fabric store and selected fabric together. We did not operate in the traditional manner of a design collaboration as the goal was not artifacts, but as in the case that Ratto (2011) made for critical making, new ways thinking about making, uncovered through the act of making.

Holly McQuillan: In making Julian's sleeve to develop the body in response, I gained an understanding of how it was made and therefore the opportunities it posed to my own work. It would have been possible to copy the outward

appearance of the sleeve and create a kind of 'surface' copy, but in doing this, I wouldn't have uncovered the opportunities of thinking this way within the confines of zero waste pattern cutting. The kinds of copies or imitations that occur within the fashion industry are usually superficial, aesthetic copies rather than technique or process developments. The goal is to generate a facsimile of the original that only withstands shallow consumer inspection, and to provide it at a lower price point. The process leads to superficial novelty within the fashion industry that provides access to fashion to the masses. While the lack of intellectual property protection afforded the fashion industry is on the one hand lauded (Raustiala & Sprigman 2006) as a testament to the success of openness, true, ground breaking and transformational innovation are not achieved because what is shared, copied and developed is often aesthetics only.

Timo Rissanen: The overall experience (designing together, teaching together) with Holly opened up new perspectives about my own practice. For example, Holly noted she was not satisfied with a garment until the pattern appeared beautiful to her and that this two-dimensional beauty might somehow be translated into the three-dimensional form. This was a revelation about zero waste fashion design: pattern cutting is as much a two dimensional aesthetic pursuit as it is a goal-oriented form of three-dimensional making.

The trousers that Julian made for Timo started as a made sleeve, which could then be interacted with physically, worn on the body in traditional and non-traditional ways, questioning customs of form, method and aesthetics. It was through making and the resulting team conversation, which led not only to trousers (from a sleeve) but also the realization that we were a collaborative design team, engaging with something that could be called critical pattern making.

All: Ratto (2011) discussed the way in which critical making draws attention to the "interwoven social and technical aspects of modern life... rather than being primarily about technical expertise or functional knowledge about the natural world". The collision of patternmaking and design that occurs in both zero waste pattern design and subtraction cutting is a clear celebration of these interwoven strands, giving the

design, maker and wearer a different and deeper understanding of the complex relationships between personal expression, form/body/space, industry and manufacture.

5. How Can This New Knowledge be Best Communicated to Foster an Environment of Risk-Taking to Ameliorate the Traditionally Risk-Adverse Fashion Industry?

During the two weeks and upon later reflection, we recognized that to respond to this final question, longer dialogue with the industry that is mentioned is required. We did not measure any impact either quantitatively or qualitatively; nonetheless, the value of non-hierarchical collaboration was clear to the workshop participants. Teaching together raises some interesting questions about parallels between fashion designer and fashion design educator. Fashion educators in general and the three authors in particular are often lauded by peers for their openness. Yet in a collaborative teaching situation, there needs to be room for disagreement and multiple points of view; this can be confusing to the students who are after singular answers.

It is worth noting that the final exhibition of the work from the three researchers and workshop participants is non-hierarchical. Individual makers were not identified, leaving the viewer to ponder the circumstances of making and the identity of the maker. The clear benefit is that all garments were equal, their anonymity affording perhaps a deeper inquiry from the viewer.

The locating of The Cutting Circle in New Zealand was primarily initially through chance. Upon reflection, however, it raised interesting issues related to the nature of the New Zealand industry in contrast to that in Europe/UK, where Roberts is based and the US where Rissanen is based. The New Zealand designer fashion industry has been recently “materializ[ed]... out of the old Apparel and Textile Industry” (Bill, 2005) a transition which demonstrates the desire for a disconnect between making and design, something that for New Zealand was seen as a necessity due to the small scale of the manufacturing industry and the inability to compete with larger labour markets such as Asia. New Zealand had to become a land of designers. However, the reality is that

small companies (which form the majority of fashion companies in New Zealand) do not produce offshore and as a consequence, many New Zealand designers need to perform the roles of designer, pattern cutter and sample machinist all at once, and fashion degrees in New Zealand emphasize the links between designing and making. This may enable more fluid communication and knowledge transfer than the larger scale industries in North America and Europe may allow.

6. The Future: Open Source Fashion Design?

Much of what fashion designers produce could be considered as ‘putatively new’, as Osborne (2003) recently said, “...creativity is a value which, though we may believe we choose it ourselves, may in fact make us complicit with what today might be seen as the most conservative of norms; compulsory individualism, compulsory innovation, compulsory performativity and productiveness, the compulsory validation of the putatively new”. Traditional fashion design is a ‘creative’ process that favours the progressive evolution from one style to the next with only the occasional spasm of rebellion. Its success relies on consumer buy-in for new season styles, which are either minor aesthetic developments of what exists in their wardrobes already or apparently reactionary leaps of visual rebellion. Very little of real worth and impact actually changes, yet fashion designers and the larger fashion industry are celebrated as creative and innovative.

Both Shingo Sato and Julian Roberts freely share their design processes, rebelling not only against aesthetic norms but also against the tradition of secrecy in the fashion industry. Timo Rissanen and Holly McQuillan similarly share all garment patterns on their respective websites. Many other examples of collaborative, open source fashion design have emerged in recent years, Zoe Romano’s Openwear at the vanguard. The growing call for openness and transparency may still strike fear into the hearts of many designers and the wider implications still need to be worked out. The sharing of design processes that do not lead to mindless copying (from designer to designer to high street to trash) may help to slow the fashion juggernaut down. The results of open source, collaborative design potentially provides

consumers with real choices instead of the illusion of choice. Finally, it has the power to reconnect designers and consumers with makers and producers, making possible an industry, which is able to do everything better. For that, we should all rejoice.

Julian Roberts: I have been quite reluctant to add to this document, because in doing so, I'd be drawing conclusions, and the story would therefore reach an end. And I don't want it to ever end. The English summer I spent in New Zealand's winter was a very special time. I got to cut with two very talented individuals, and get a measure of them as people. Fashion is too rarely approached from an anthropological direction. But our own humanity is revealed in our actions and sensitivities as makers. We were able to overcome our intimidation, take risks and spin ideas out in directions none of us intended, and to involve a talented group of students in our collaboration. They made us have to seek out the sense in our actions, we needed not just a passive audience with wide eyes, but a group of skilled hands able to test drive ideas and allow them to crash. We learned so much from our mistakes, but also from a collaborative audience, making their own errors and doing the things we simply don't have time or inclination to. I don't want to reach a conclusion. I don't want the reader to think that the possibilities of our collaboration were somehow exhausted, and that we're content in our academic ingenuity, because actually, we barely scratched the surface. The possibilities of creative cutting and risk taking are inexhaustible. We better get our collective skates on because we've a long way to go, and we've barely started out.

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